

REMARKS

Claims 1, 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicant regards as the invention. Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

The Examiner objected to the term "the inner side." In response, Applicant has amended Claim 1 to refer to "an inboard side" instead of "the inner side." The Examiner also objected to the term "radially inward rim flange." In response, Applicant has also amended Claim 1 to refer to an "inboard annular rim flange" instead of the "radially inward rim flange." Accordingly, in light of the claim amendments, Applicant respectfully submits that Claim 1, as amended, is clear for the purposes of 35 U.S.C. §112, second paragraph. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of this §112 rejection of independent Claim 1 and associated dependent Claims 8 and 9.

Claims 1, 8 and 9 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103 as being unpatentable over United States Patent No. 5,350,220 to Robert J. Atwell, Jr. (hereinafter "the Atwell reference"). Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection.

Applicant respectfully submits that the Atwell reference fails to disclose or suggest all of the features of the present invention. More specifically, the Atwell reference fails to disclose or suggest a wheel including, *inter alia*, a rim with a "single ring-like element" that protrudes inwardly from a radially inner surface of the rim, and

wherein the single ring-like element "is the only ring-like element provided on said radially inner surfaced of said rim," as now recited in amended independent Claim 1.

One example of an embodiment that includes the claimed "single ring-like element" is shown in Applicant's Figure 1. As can be seen in this figure, the single ring-like element 26 is the only ring like element provided on the radially inner surface of rim 21. Such a configuration brings about weight reduction, without deteriorating road noise performance.

In contrast to the single ring-like element that is the only ring like-element provided on the inner surface of the rim, as recited in Claim 1, the device of Figure 4 of the Atwell reference includes two ring-like elements on the inner surface of the rim. More specifically, Figure 4 of the Atwell reference includes ring-like elements 18 and 20 on the radially inner side of rim 16. According to the Atwell reference, the two ring-like elements 18 and 20 are provided in an annularly protruding manner for providing seating surfaces for balance weights 26 on the inner peripheral surface of the rim on the inboard side in order to avoid allowing the weights 26 to spoil the appearance of the outboard side of the wheel. Elements 18 and 20 are provided on the inner peripheral surface of the vehicle inboard side in the region of the inboard bead seat and in the region of a rim part on the inner side in the direction of the wheel axis inwardly of the hump. Thus, not only are two ring-like elements provided in the Atwell reference (as opposed to the single ring-like element recited in Claim 1), but the purpose of the two ring-like elements of Atwell differs from the purpose of the single ring-like element of Claim 1 (providing a

seating surface for balance weights as opposed to allowing weight reduction without deteriorating road noise performance). Accordingly, there is no disclosure or suggestion of all of the elements of Claim 1. Therefore, Applicant respectfully requests the withdrawal of this §103 rejection of independent Claim 1 and associated dependent Claims 8 and 9.

Applicant has also added new Claims 10-13. Claims 10 and 11 are dependent claims that, directly or indirectly, refer back to independent Claim 1, and therefore include all of the features of Claim 1. Accordingly, Claims 10 and 11 should be allowable for at least the reasons discussed above with regard to Claim 1.

Claim 12 is a new independent claim that includes language reciting "said inboard annular rim flange includes an inboard-facing surface that is generally co-planar with an inboard-facing surface of said ring-like element." Similar language can also be found in dependent Claim 10. Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 10 and 12 are allowable because the feature defined in the above-quoted language is not disclosed or suggested in the cited references.

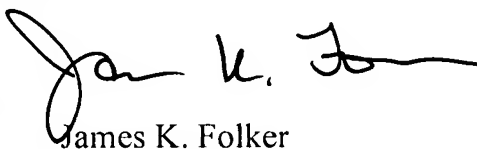
One example of an embodiment with an inboard annular rim flange that includes an inboard-facing surface that is generally co-planar with an inboard-facing surface of the ring-like element can be seen in Applicant's Figure 1. More specifically, Applicant's Figure 1 shows inboard annular rim flange 22B, which includes an inboard-facing surface 22B1 that is generally co-planar with an inboard-facing surface 26a of the ring-like element 26. In contrast, as can be seen in Figure 4 of the Atwell reference, the

inboard-facing surface of the inboard annular rim flange (the right-hand most surface of the right-hand flange) is not generally coplanar with the right-hand surface of ring-like element 20. Thus, for at least this reason, independent Claim 12, and associated dependent Claim 13, as well as dependent Claim 10 (which refers back to Claim 1) should be allowable.

For all of the foregoing reasons, Applicant submits that this Application is in condition for allowance, which is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned attorney if an interview would expedite prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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